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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: Lee Watts, et al.
Serial No.: 10/775,033
Filed: February 9, 2004
Group Art Unit: 3753
Examiner: Fox, John C.
Title: EXHAUST PIPE VALVE

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

RESPONSE

Dear Sir:

In response to the final Office Action of April 13, 2006, please consider the following remarks. Claims 1 and 3-25 remain pending in the application. Claim 2 has been cancelled.

Claims 1, 3-5, 11, 13, and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Thauer (US 3693935). Claim 1 recites that the side of the bearing sleeve that faces away from the valve plate is a secondary bearing surface, and that the washer has a secondary sealing surface that cooperates with the secondary bearing surface. Thauer does not disclose this feature.

The examiner argues that the upper face of washer 13 and the lower face of bearing 3 in Thauer can be considered as sealing faces because they are flat abutting surfaces. The examiner further argues that "it would be inherent to this structure that a seal of some degree is formed between the washer and bearing. For example, a sufficient seal to prevent atmospheric gases from entering the bearing." Applicant respectfully asserts that this is not a reasonable interpretation of Thauer.

Element 13 in Thauer comprises an insulating disc that is used to shield the spring 11 from the effect of heat from the exhaust pipe 2. See col. 2, lines 36-40. This insulating disc 13 does not, and cannot, provide a sealing effect. In the only Figure of Thauer, it is clear that there